



City of Seattle
Office of Mayor Mike McGinn

News

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Mayor promotes free and reduced-fee preschool programs

Data shows that Preschool is a key to success in kindergarten and beyond

SEATTLE – Joined by educators and children of Seattle's La Escuelita Bilingual School, Mayor Mike McGinn today announced openings in the City of Seattle's free and reduced-fee preschool programs.

The Seattle Human Services Department is now enrolling 4-year-olds from low- to moderate-income families in free or low-cost, high-quality preschool programs. Step Ahead and the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) still have free or reduced-cost spaces available for more than 250 children at 21 sites in southeast and southwest Seattle this school year. Step Ahead is funded by the Seattle Families and Education Levy, and ECEAP is funded by the state of Washington. For more information about these programs — locations, eligibility and applications — call 206-386-1050.

"Preschool is key to preparing our kids for a strong education and beyond," said Mayor Mike McGinn. "An economic analysis cited in a Harvard education brief shows that investments in early learning programs produce the greatest returns – ranging from \$4 to \$9 per dollar invested – and benefit the community through reduced crime, welfare and higher incomes in adulthood. A good education is critical for a vibrant workforce for our city to compete in the global economy."

City's Preschool Programs

The City of Seattle Human Services Department (HSD) funds two free preschool programs – Step Ahead and Early Childhood Education and Assistance – that help children prepare for kindergarten. Research shows that children who participate in preschool programs enter kindergarten with the language, literacy, critical thinking and math skills to succeed in kindergarten and beyond.

Step Ahead Preschools: The Step Ahead preschool program, funded by the 2004 Families & Education Levy, offers free or low-cost, culturally and linguistically appropriate preschools to eligible four-year-olds. Part-day programs provide a three and a half-hour instructional day for children, four to five days a week from September to June. Full-day programs provide six or more hours a day for children, five days a week from September to June. Teachers provide daily opportunities for children to improve skills in language and literacy, math concepts, science, social studies, arts, physical development, and social and emotional development.

HSD provided \$1.9 million of Families & Education Levy funds to Step Ahead Program classrooms for the 2011-12 school year. City allocations to the nonprofit, community-based organizations providing these services are determined through a competitive process that is conducted by the Human Services Department at least once every four years.

Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP): The Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP), funded through the State Department of Early Learning and the City of Seattle, offers free high-quality, culturally and linguistically appropriate preschool services for eligible three- and four-year-olds. The primary goal is to help participating children develop the skills they need to be ready for school and acquire a passion for lifelong learning. Families have access to information, resources, and training that support them.

HSD provided approximately \$2 million to nonprofit, community-based organizations operating ECEAP classrooms for the 2011-12 school year.

Eligibility and application information: The requirements for the ECEAP and Step Ahead Programs are listed below.

Step Ahead Program:

- Children must be four years old by August 31 of the participating year
- Families must live in Seattle city limits
- Programs are located in southeast and southwest Seattle

ECEAP:

- Children must be three or four years old by August 31 of the participating year
- Families must live or work in Seattle city limits
- Families must be within the income limits below
- Programs are located throughout Seattle
- Foster children are eligible

For both Step Ahead and ECEAP, families must be within the income limits listed below:

ECEAP and Step Ahead Income Guidelines 2011 – 2012		
Family Size	ECEAP Gross Monthly Income	Step Ahead Gross Monthly Income
2	\$0 - \$1,348	\$1,349 - \$3,678
3	\$0 - \$1,698	\$1,699 - \$4,632
4	\$0 - \$2,048	\$2,049 - \$5,589
5	\$0 - \$2,398	\$2,399 - \$6,543
6	\$0 - \$2,748	\$2,749 - \$7,497

“Seattle has great quality of living and good schools, but achievement gap persists for children of color, children from low-income families, and children living in certain areas of city,” said Mayor McGinn. “The City has been using Families & Education Levy investments since 2005 to help reduce achievement gap by increasing preschool quality and the number of children who enter kindergarten ready for school.”

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